

**A RESOLUTION OF THE ARIZONA GAME AND FISH COMMISSION
CONCERNING THE LOSS OF MULTIPLE-USE PUBLIC LANDS
DUE TO SPECIAL LAND-USE DESIGNATIONS**

WHEREAS, Arizona's great strength lies in the value of its public lands, and the ability for the public to access and utilize those lands for a variety of recreational uses, and;

WHEREAS, although federal lands make up 42 percent of Arizona, more than 43 percent of those lands have special land use designations which prescribe significant restrictions to recreation and management. Only 23 percent of Arizona's lands remain open for public use and free from special land use designations, and more than 77 percent of Arizona's lands are restricted from public access and recreation through ownership (private, state, and tribal) or through federal special land use designations, and;

WHEREAS, the conservation of wildlife resources is the trust responsibility of the Arizona Game and Fish Commission (Commission) and this extends to all lands within Arizona, to ensure abundant wildlife resources for current and future generations, and;

WHEREAS, with 4.5 million acres, Arizona has the third highest total designated wilderness acreage in the U.S. This, coupled with an additional 5.8 million acres of special land use designations including National Monuments, National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, National Conservation Areas, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Wilderness Characteristics Areas, has caused the systematic loss of recreational opportunities and erosion of the Arizona Game and Fish Department's (Department) ability to proactively manage wildlife on more than 10.3 million acres, and;

WHEREAS, the Arizona Game and Fish Department has experienced adverse impacts resulting from special land use designations including loss of motorized access, project delays, increased costs, increased man-hours, and legal challenges. These ultimately lead to decreased efficiency in conserving and managing Arizona's wildlife resources, and;

WHEREAS, public land managers have a responsibility to the people of Arizona to ensure continued opportunities for multiple-use recreational activities. For example, FLPMA (1976) is the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) "organic act" that establishes the agency's multiple-use mandate to serve present and future generations. Once federal lands are converted to special use lands such as Wilderness and National Monuments, the FLPMA mandate no longer applies and those lands permanently lose multiple-use provisions, and;

WHEREAS, the National Park Service is currently operating with a deferred maintenance backlog of \$11.49 billion dollars and is unable to keep up with current needs. This deferred maintenance affects road upkeep, water delivery, and safety of park visitors. The Grand Canyon, alone, has \$329 million in deferred maintenance. Adding new responsibilities to this already overburdened system through additional special use designations puts wildlife habitats and populations at risk, and;

WHEREAS, in spite of organic legislation emphasizing multiple-use of public lands, neither the USFS nor BLM has established any objectives for acreages of public lands to be maintained in full multiple-use, free from restrictive designations in Arizona, and;

WHEREAS, the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 and the Federal Land and Policy Management Act of 1976 both legally prohibit the federal land management agencies from affecting the state's jurisdiction and responsibilities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Arizona Game and Fish Commission supports public land use that provides Arizona's public and resources with a net benefit, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Arizona Game and Fish Commission opposes further conversion of public lands from multiple-use to land use designations that result in the net loss of wildlife resources, wildlife-related recreational opportunities and associated economic benefits, without expressed concurrence of the state of Arizona and the Commission, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that any proposed special land use designation must analyze the cumulative impacts of further loss of public lands that provide for multiple-use and wildlife-related recreational and economic opportunities, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that any proposed special land use designation on federal lands must analyze the impact to the Arizona Game and Fish Department's ability to fulfill its trust responsibility to manage the state's wildlife resources.

ADOPTED on the 15th day of January, 2016 by the Arizona Game and Fish Commission.



Kurt R. Davis

Chairman

Arizona Game and Fish Commission

